

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A method for providing a reward to a bidder participating in an auction, the method comprising:

identifying a product subject to bidding during an auction session;
receiving a bid for the product from a bidder during the auction session;
determining, based on a reward rule, whether the bidder is qualified to receive a reward other than the product; and
transmitting, to the bidder if the bidder is qualified, an indication that the bidder is qualified to receive the reward.

2. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
determining, based on the bid, whether the bidder is qualified to receive the product; and if the bidder is qualified:

transmitting to the bidder, an indication that the bidder is qualified to receive the product.

3. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 2, wherein the step of determining, based on the bid, whether the bidder is qualified to receive the product, further comprises:

determining whether the bid is greater than each of a plurality of remaining bids.

4. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, wherein the reward comprises at least one of:

a value of currency, a supplement to the bid, a rebate on the product, an amount of frequent flier miles, a second product, and a warranty for the product.

5. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, wherein the reward rule comprises a condition that the bidder accept an offer provided by a third party.
6. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 5, further comprising:
transmitting, before the determining step, an offer to the bidder for a second product provided by the third party;
receiving an acceptance of the offer from the bidder; whereby the bidder is qualified to receive the reward.
7. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 6, wherein the second product is a service.
8. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 7, wherein the service is a credit card account and wherein the third party is a credit card provider.
9. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 6, wherein the reward is a supplement to the bid, the supplement including a value of currency.
10. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 5, further comprising:
determining whether the bidder has an acceptable credit history before the offer is transmitted to the bidder.
11. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
receiving at least one bid for the product from each of a plurality of remaining bidders.

12. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 11, wherein the step of receiving at least one bid is performed prior to the step of receiving the bid.

13. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 12, wherein the reward rule includes a condition that the bid from the bidder is greater than each bid received from the plurality of remaining bidders.

14. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 12, further comprising:
determining which of the at least one bids is a greatest bid.

15. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 14, wherein the reward rule comprises a condition that the bid from the bidder is greater than the greatest bid by a predetermined percentage.

16. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 14, wherein the reward rule comprises a condition that the bid from the bidder is greater than the greatest bid by a predetermined currency value.

17. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, wherein the reward rule comprises a condition that the bid is a first received bid.

18. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 17, wherein the reward is a currency value corresponding to a value of the bid.

19. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 17, wherein the reward corresponds to a difference between the bid and a greatest bid.

20. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, in which the establishing step comprises:

establishing the reward rule to include a condition that a greatest bid is at least equal to a predetermined value; and the method further comprising:

receiving a second bid for the product from a second bidder, wherein the second bid is the greatest bid; and

determining whether the greatest bid is at least equal to the predetermined value, whereby if the greatest bid is at least equal to the predetermined value, the bidder is qualified to receive the reward.

21. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 20, wherein the step of determining, based on the reward rule further comprises:

determining, based on the reward rule, whether the second bidder is qualified to receive a reward; and if the second bidder is qualified:

transmitting, to the second bidder, an indication that the second bidder is qualified to receive the reward, whereby if the greatest bid is at least equal to the predetermined value, the second bidder is qualified to receive the reward.

22. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, in which the establishing step further comprises:

establishing the reward rule including a condition that the bid exceed a prior bid, the method further comprising:

receiving a prior bid, wherein the determining step further comprises:

determining whether the bid is greater than the prior bid; whereby if the bid is greater than the prior bid, the bidder is qualified to receive the reward.

23. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 22, wherein the reward rule further includes a condition that the bid exceed a prior bid by a predetermined value; and

wherein the step of determining whether the bid is greater than the prior bid further comprises:

determining whether the bid is greater than the prior bid by a predetermined value, whereby if the bid is greater than the prior bid by the predetermined value, the bidder is qualified to receive the reward.

24. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 22, wherein the prior bid is received from the bidder.

25. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 22, wherein the prior bid is received from a second bidder.

26. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 25, wherein the bid is equal to the prior bid, and wherein the bid and the prior bid are a highest bid.

27. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 26, further comprising:
comparing a participation history of the bidder and the second bidder; and
awarding the product based on the comparison.

28. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
establishing the reward rule including a condition that the bidder submit a progressive bid that is greater by at least a predetermined value than a prior bid;
receiving the prior bid from the bidder; and wherein the determining step further comprises:
determining whether the bid is greater than the prior bid by at least the predetermined value; whereby if the bid is greater than the prior bid by at least the predetermined value, the bidder is qualified to receive the reward.
29. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 28, wherein the predetermined value corresponds to a percentage of the prior bid.
30. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, in which the establishing step further comprises:
establishing the reward rule including a condition that the bidder submits a predetermined number of bids, the method further comprising:
receiving at least one prior bid from the bidder; and wherein the determining step further comprises:
determining whether a number of bids from the bidder, including the bid and the at least one prior bid, is at least equal to the predetermined number of bids, whereby if the number of bids is at least equal to the predetermined number of bids, the bidder is qualified to receive the reward.

31. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, in which the establishing step further comprises:

establishing the reward rule including a condition that a bidder submit at least two bids within a predetermined amount of time; the method further comprising:

receiving a second bid from the bidder; and wherein the determining step further comprises:

determining whether the bid and the second bid were received within the predetermined amount of time.

32. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

measuring a time between the bid and a previous bid from a second bidder; and in which the establishing step further comprises:

establishing the reward rule including a condition that the bidder is qualified to receive the reward when the time is greater than a predetermined value; and wherein the determining step further comprises:

determining whether the time between the bid and the previous bid is greater than the predetermined value.

33. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

measuring a time between the bid and a previous bid from a second bidder; and in which the establishing step further comprises:

establishing the reward rule including a condition that the bidder is qualified to receive the reward when the time is greater than a predetermined value; and wherein the determining step further comprises:

determining whether the time between the bid and the previous bid is less than the predetermined value.

34. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, in which the establishing step further comprises:

establishing a reward rule that a historic participation of the bidder meets a predefined criterion; and wherein the determining step further comprises:

measuring the historic participation of the bidder; and

determining whether the historic participation meets the predefined criterion.

35. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 34, wherein the predefined criterion includes a requirement that the bidder has participated in at least one previous auction session.

36. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 34, wherein the historic participation corresponds to at least one of: a number of previous auctions in which the bidder participated, a number of previous auctions which the bidder won, and an amount of profit earned from the bidder.

37. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
receiving personal data from the bidder including at least one of a name, an address and a financial account identifier belonging to the bidder.

38. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 37, further comprising:
verifying the personal data with a third party.

39. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, wherein the receiving step includes:
receiving the bid from the bidder over one of a telecommunications network and the Internet.
40. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, wherein the product is a service.
41. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
providing the reward to the bidder.
42. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
receiving, from the bidder, a payment to close the auction session.
43. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 42, wherein the payment is determined from a parallel auction.
44. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
receiving, from the bidder, a payment to extend the auction session.
45. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 44, wherein the payment is determined from a parallel auction.
46. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
terminating the reward if a higher bid is received from a second bidder.
47. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, wherein the reward rule includes a condition that the reward be issued randomly.

48. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, wherein the reward to be offered is determined based on at least one of:

the bidder's participation history, the bid spread, the product, a statistical likelihood that the bid will be a greatest bid, and the average highest bid historically submitted for a similar product.

49. (ORIGINAL) The method of claim 1, wherein the receiving step includes:

receiving an encrypted indication of a time the bid was transmitted.

50-60. (CANCELLED)

61. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) An apparatus for providing a reward to a bidder participating in an auction, comprising:

means for identifying a product subject to bidding during an auction session;

means for receiving a bid for the product from a bidder during the auction session;

means for determining, based on a reward rule, whether the bidder is qualified to receive a reward other than the product, and

means for transmitting, to the bidder if the bidder is qualified to receive a reward, an indication that the bidder is qualified to receive the reward.

62. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) An apparatus for providing a reward to a bidder participating in an auction, comprising:

a storage device; and

a processor connected to the storage device,

the storage device storing a program for controlling the processor; and

the processor operative with the program to:

identify a product subject to bidding during an auction session;

receive a bid for the product from a bidder during the auction session;

determine, based on a reward rule, whether the bidder is qualified to receive a reward other than the product; and

transmit, to the bidder if the bidder is qualified to receive the reward, an indication that the bidder is qualified to receive the reward.

63. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer readable medium encoded with processing instructions for implementing a method for providing a reward to a bidder participating in an auction, the method comprising:

identifying a product subject to bidding during an auction session;

receiving a bid for the product from a bidder during the auction session;

determining, based on a reward rule, whether the bidder is qualified to receive a reward other than the product; and

transmitting, to the bidder if the bidder is qualified to receive the reward, an indication that the bidder is qualified to receive the reward.

64-66 (CANCELLED)

67. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A method, comprising:
identifying a product subject to bidding during an auction session;
receiving a bid for the product with an encrypted date and time of submission of the bid from a bidder during the auction session;
decrypting the date and time of submission;
accepting the bid if the decrypted date and time of submission indicates that the bid was submitted before a scheduled closing time of the auction session;
determining, based on a reward rule, whether the bidder is qualified to receive a reward other than the product; and
transmitting, and if the bidder is qualified, an indication that the bidder is qualified to receive the reward.
68. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 67, further comprising:
determining, based on the bid, whether the bidder is qualified to receive the product; and
transmitting, if the bidder is qualified, an indication that the bidder is qualified to receive the product.
69. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 68, in which determining whether the bidder is qualified to receive the product comprises determining whether the bid is greater than each of a plurality of remaining bids.
70. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 67, wherein the reward rule comprises a condition that the bidder accept an offer provided by a third party.

71. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 67, further comprising receiving at least one bid for the product from each of a plurality of remaining bidders.
72. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 71, wherein the reward rule includes a condition that the bid from the bidder is greater than each bid received from the plurality of remaining bidders.
73. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 72, wherein the reward rule comprises a condition that the bid from the bidder is greater than the greatest bid by a predetermined percentage.
74. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 73, wherein the reward rule further comprises a condition that the bid from the bidder is greater than the greatest bid by a predetermined currency value.
75. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 67, further comprising receiving personal data from the bidder including at least one of a name, an address and a financial account identifier associated with the bidder.
76. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 67, in which receiving the bid comprises receiving the bid from the bidder over one of a telecommunications network and the Internet.
77. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 67, further comprising receiving, from the bidder, a payment to close the auction session.

78. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 77, wherein the payment is determined from a parallel auction.

79. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 67, further comprising terminating the reward if a higher bid is received from a second bidder.

80. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 67, wherein the reward to be offered is determined based on at least one of the bidder's participation history, a bid spread, the product, a statistical likelihood that the bid will be a greatest bid, randomly, and the average highest bid historically submitted for a similar product.

81. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 67, in which receiving the bid comprises receiving an encrypted indication of a time and date of submission of the bid.

82. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer readable medium storing instructions configured to direct a processor to:

identify a product subject to bidding during an auction session;

receive a bid for the product with an encrypted date and time of submission of the bid from a bidder during the auction session;

decrypt the date and time of submission;

accept the bid if the decrypted date and time of submission indicates that the bid was submitted before a scheduled closing time of the auction session;

determine, based on a reward rule, whether the bidder is qualified to receive a reward other than the product; and

transmit, and if the bidder is qualified, an indication that the bidder is qualified to receive the reward.

83. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) An apparatus, comprising:
- a storage device; and
 - a processor operatively connected to the storage device,
- the storage device storing a program for use by the processor to:
- identify a product subject to bidding during an auction session;
 - receive a bid for the product with an encrypted date and time of submission of the bid from a bidder during the auction session;
 - decrypt the date and time of submission;
 - accept the bid if the decrypted date and time of submission indicates that the bid was submitted before a scheduled closing time of the auction session;
 - determine, based on a reward rule, whether the bidder is qualified to receive a reward other than the product; and
 - transmit, and if the bidder is qualified, an indication that the bidder is qualified to receive the reward.

- 84-87. (CANCELLED)

88. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A method, comprising:

- receiving a bid for a product from a first bidder during an auction session;
- determining, based on a reward rule, whether the first bidder is qualified to receive a reward other than the product;
- transmitting, if the first bidder is qualified, an indication that the first bidder is qualified to receive the reward;
- receiving a bid for the product from a second bidder during the auction session;
- determining, based on the reward rule, whether the second bidder is qualified to receive a reward other than the product;
- transmitting, if the second bidder is qualified, an indication that the second bidder is qualified to receive the reward; and
- transmitting an indication to the first bidder revoking the qualification of the first bidder to receive the reward.

89. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 88, which further comprises, prior to determining whether the first bidder is qualified to receive a reward, determining whether the first bidder has sufficient funds to pay a value of the bid.

90. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 88, further comprising, prior to determining whether the first bidder qualifies to receive a reward:

- determining whether the bid of the first bidder is greater than a current bid;

and

- assessing a penalty against the first bidder if the bid of the first bidder is less than the current bid.

91. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 88, which further comprises, prior to transmitting an indication that the first bidder is qualified to receive the reward, storing bid information including a time and date of receipt of the bid from the first bidder.

92. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 88, which further comprises, prior to determining whether the second bidder is qualified to receive a reward, determining whether the second bidder has sufficient funds to pay a value of the bid.

93. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 88, further comprising, prior to determining whether the second bidder qualifies to receive a reward:

determining whether the bid of the second bidder is greater than the bid of the first bidder; and

assessing a penalty against the second bidder if the bid of the second bidder is less than the bid of the first bidder.

94. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 88, which further comprises, prior to transmitting an indication that the second bidder is qualified to receive the reward, storing bid information including a time and date of receipt of the bid from the second bidder.

95. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A computer readable medium storing instructions configured to direct a processor to:

receive a bid for a product from a first bidder during an auction session;

determine, based on a reward rule, whether the first bidder is qualified to receive a reward other than the product;

transmit, if the first bidder is qualified, an indication that the first bidder is qualified to receive the reward;

receive a bid for the product from a second bidder during the auction session;

determine, based on the reward rule, whether the second bidder is qualified to receive a reward other than the product;

transmit, if the second bidder is qualified, an indication that the second bidder is qualified to receive the reward; and

transmit an indication to the first bidder revoking the qualification of the first bidder to receive the reward.

96. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) An apparatus for providing a reward to a bidder participating in an auction, comprising:

- a storage device; and

- a processor connected to the storage device,

- the storage device storing a program for controlling the processor; and

- the processor operative with the program to:

 - receive a bid for a product from a first bidder during an auction session;

 - determine, based on a reward rule, whether the first bidder is qualified to receive a reward other than the product;

 - transmit, if the first bidder is qualified, an indication that the first bidder is qualified to receive the reward;

 - receive a bid for the product from a second bidder during the auction session;

 - determine, based on the reward rule, whether the second bidder is qualified to receive a reward other than the product;

 - transmit, if the second bidder is qualified, an indication that the second bidder is qualified to receive the reward; and

 - transmit an indication to the first bidder revoking the qualification of the first bidder to receive the reward.